



50 years

providing
housing and care

Eildon

1973-2023

The demand for housing and care is growing and we hope to continue to work alongside our partners and stakeholders to fulfil that need.



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Foreword from Nile Istephan, Eildon CEO

It's with great pride that I'm writing to mark our 50th Anniversary of providing Housing and Care in the Borders.

We came from such humble beginnings in 1973 when a small group of staff at Dingleton hospital nurtured an idea to help those in most need of housing and support in our community. That little seed has grown. We've stayed true to our origins and values and over the years we've worked with many fantastic people and organisations. One thing I can absolutely put my hand on my heart and say is that Board members and staff, past and present, are unified in working to address the housing, care and support needs within the Borders, and will remain committed to this task beyond this landmark 50th anniversary.

To our many tenants and customers from over the years...

I want to say a huge thank you.

The early years

Eildon Housing Association has grown to become one of Scotland's most successful housing associations.

We started in 1973 from very humble beginnings, when a small group of staff at Dingleton Hospital in Melrose wanted to help patients to live in their own homes in the community. It was decided that the best way to do this was to create a housing association run as a charitable organisation by volunteers. Back in the 1970s this was recognised as an innovative approach, later adopted nationally as part of the Care in the Community philosophy.

Since then, we have stayed true to our founding principles and values of being Caring, Committed, Connected, Creative – an ethos which continues to run through all the strands of the organisation to this day.



From this small seed, we have grown, and are now a complex multi-million-pound charitable organisation. To date we have 3,000 homes in 50 communities in the Scottish Borders and provide specialised care and supported housing. We are a leading business in the region, offering great employment opportunities and proud to be a 'Living Wage Employer.'

■ Above: Dingleton Hospital, Melrose.



Our People

We wouldn't be here today without our founding members.

Baron Russell Sanderson, JB Baxter and Jimmie Millar (and his front room) for all the organising in the earlier years. As well as Drew Tulley our first Shareholder.

Bill Wilkie MBE, joined back in 1978 and was appointed as vice-chair in 1980. He then went on to become Chairman and remained in this position from 1982 until 2009 – an amazing 27 years at the helm. Find out more about his amazing Eildon journey.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCzY63MYAv0>



■ **Left:** Staff members from the early days.

We would not exist without the guidance of our voluntary board members. Since 1973 there have been many talented people who sat on the Board, giving their time for free and providing a vast range of knowledge, skills, and valued experience. Due to their dedication, our aims have continually been realised.

As well as our founding members, our sincere thanks also go to our Chairs who have guided us through the last 50 years: Bill Wilkie, Heather Cuckow,

Trevor Burrows, Dave Alexander and our current Chair, Cathie Fancy. They have provided invaluable guidance and wisdom.

- **Bill Wilkie MBE** was appointed as vice-chair in 1980 and went on to become Chairman and remained in this position from 1982 until 2009
- **Heather Cuckow** was appointed Chair from 2009-2015

- **Trevor Burrows** joined Eildon in 2003 and was Chairman from 2015 to 2018 as well as Chairman of Eildon Enterprise from 2004 to 2014.
- **Dave Alexander** was Chair from 2018-2022
- **Cathie Fancy** is our current Chair.

We also want to give thanks to all our hard working and committed staff who have all played a valuable role over the last fifty years working for Eildon.



■ **Above:** Eildon people including Bill Wilkie MBE, Heather Cuckow, Trevor Burrows, Dave Alexander and our current Chair, Cathie Fancy.

Incredibly there have only been two Chief Executives over the 50 years – Peter Lee and Nile Istephan.

Peter Lee was appointed to Eildon in 1985, before that he was Research and Development Officer for the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and prior to that an architect in Edinburgh.

Nile Istephan was appointed Chief Executive in April 2010. Prior to that he held senior positions in Scottish Homes, Communities Scotland and the Scottish Government.



■ **Clockwise from top left:** Peter Lee; Nile Istephan; current Eildon Board Members, Executive team and guest, Ian Brennan.



Addressing housing and care needs in the Borders

There were some extremely poor housing conditions in the rural areas of Scotland when we were first established. Operating through our voluntary board members and agency service contracts from local authorities, we launched as as a regional Housing Association address the Housing and Care need in the region.

50 years providing housing and care



■ **Peebles, Northgate:** Examples shown are of living conditions before renovations took place in the Northgate, Peebles. The bottom right photo shows the renovations of Peebles Old Town.

Growth of the organisation

We acquired houses in Galashiels, Selkirk and Melrose gradually beginning to expand to provide a comprehensive range of rented housing initially focused on single people, the elderly and special needs.

Staff were recruited and suitable office space was acquired in Melrose, firstly at East Port, and then Eildon House, Dingleton Road, Melrose to manage the increasing size of the organisation.

We moved to our own current office, the Weaving Shed in Selkirk in 2009.



■ Above: office accommodation in Melrose.

New homes, new build and refurbished

As we've grown in size, we've seen an increase in the amount of homes we've built and refurbished. We now have around 3,000 properties across the whole of the Borders and have built small, rural projects to larger scale developments.

Our developments give people a safe and secure place to call home.



■ **Clockwise from top left:** Yarrowford; Station Court, Cardrona; Coopersknowe, Galashiels; Stitchill, Ednam Road.



Meeting the needs of the people we serve

As the main provider of new homes in the Scottish Borders, we have provided many homes over the years in many different locations and to meet a range of general needs.

We have also built and renovated many homes for older people, from wheelchair accessible homes to adapted properties for particular needs.

Our region has seen many changes of the last 50 years, and Eildon's investment has ensured that the needs of our community have been responded to.

■ **Opposite:** We have adapted homes and also added adaptations to meet our customer needs.

50 years providing housing and care





Addressing the social care needs of our communities

We continue to grow and prosper and embark on the biggest and most ambitious development programme in our history. We will look to deliver up to 800 new homes by 2027 and also continue to meet the social care needs of our communities.

High praise for our Housing Support service

We take great pride in delivering a high quality supported housing service, and continue to be recognised for the positive impact we make to people's lives.



■ Partnering with Cycling Without Age Scotland to launch the first Trishaw 'Galavanter' for Galashiels.



Innovation and awards

We have always been innovative in our approach and with that have had a track record of winning awards for our homes and services.

We continue to make good use of technology by giving customers more choice in how they receive our services. Our three Passivhaus homes at Springfield Terrace in St Boswells were completed early 2020. These highly sustainable new homes included innovative techniques such as Passivhaus to respond to the environmental and carbon reduction challenges we face leading the way for house building of the future.

■ **Above:** Selkirk High Street winning development, Scottish Home Awards 2019.

■ **Below:** Springfield Place, St Boswells, Passivhaus development finalist at the Inside Housing Development Awards 2021.



Outstanding awards



■ Winners of the Ivor Goodsite Hoarding Competition at our development at Elworthy Place, Galashiels. Clovenfords, Burgh, St Peters', St Margaret's, Stow, Tweedbank and Langlee Primary schools painted the safety hoarding (fence) to the theme of why they love living in the Borders. There was fierce competition with 83 entries from across the UK and Ireland, so winning the competition alongside Cruden was a huge achievement.



■ In 2022 Dave Alexander was given the accolade of 'Outstanding Contribution to Housing Winner' at the CIH Scotland Housing Awards 2022.

Innovation in our workforce



■ We created our own HIT (home improvement team) who have skilled trades which help us provide a high-quality maintenance and repair service carrying out planned and reactive repairs. We own and manage 3000 quality homes, so this team concentrate on a programme of works to replace kitchens, bathrooms and windows when required.



■ We promoted our staff volunteering initiative – ‘Eildon Makes a Difference’.

Partnerships and our relationships

We always strive to work with a wide range of partners for the benefit of the Borders and the wider community.

Many of our projects have been made possible due to the positive working relationships between Scottish Government, Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and other statutory partners.

Our ability to adapt and change direction as we have grown and circumstances change has been fundamental to our success.

Our collaboration both in the Borders and across Scotland with agency services and participation in national forums has been key to our progress.

Our partnership with the Borders Housing Network (BHN) and the Fuel Bank Foundation has been instrumental in us supporting so many households with the rising number of cases of hardship. The Borders Housing Network (BHN) worked together to address the significant challenges of rising energy costs.

■ **Above:** The OPAL service for the Borders was launched in partnership with Opal/Cyrenians. This valuable service delivers social activity and learning groups, befriending, community support, events and digital skills.

■ **Below:** We partnered with Cyrenians, FareShare and SBC to set up a Community Foodhub to address the heightened need for access to food as a result of the pandemic and the rural location of communities in the Borders.



More than just bricks and mortar

Over the years we have offered a range of services for tenants and others in housing need.

This ever-evolving approach to the provision of affordable housing for people needing a range of care and support packages, remains a priority.

In 2004 the **Borders Care & Repair** service was launched in partnership with Scottish Borders Council. This highly successful service helps older people (over 60) and those physically disabled to remain in their own homes, by providing help with repairs, improvements, and adaptations.

Our Tenancy sustainment team give help, support and advice to anyone with a new tenancy, or having difficulties managing their tenancy. The support ranges from eligibility and applications for benefits, budgeting, applications for funding and assessing support services.

Community Planning Partnership

Eildon has always been committed to working in partnership for the benefit of the Borders region. We have been consistent and enthusiastic participants in the Community Planning Partnership, providing practical solutions to issues facing the region, whether that be responses to economic changes, support for significant issues such as the 'fair work agenda', or more recently, collaboration in terms of the emergency response to the COVID lockdown. We remain engaged and available to meet future challenges alongside our partner organisations.



Local business and employer

Over the years Eildon has grown to become a significant economic force in the region. Our new build programme alone pumps £108 million into the local economy, and we have independent evidence that at least 80% of this investment is retained in the region and generates multiplier effects for the local economy. As a rural region, we recognise the inter-dependence we have with other partners in the public, private and third sectors and we use our spending power to maximise these opportunities through our procurement and community benefit activities.

Our growth strategy means that we now employ around 250 staff, across a diverse workforce of over 60 different job roles. We take our responsibility as a leading local employer very seriously and we are proud to have achieved recognition through Investors in People (Gold), and the European Foundation of Quality Management (5 Stars), and as an accredited Living Wage Organisation.

We have always managed to attract professional, dedicated and highly professional staff to take forward the important work that we do. All of our staff are aligned to our corporate values of being Caring, Committed, Connected and Creative.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™
We invest in people Gold

EFQM  Recognised for Excellence
5 Star



Our Current Strategy

We have achieved a lot over the last 50 years, but we recognise there is much more to do.

Our current strategy plans to build up to 800 new affordable homes, transform to be a greener organisation and decarbonise our housing stock. We want to address a range of social care and housing needs shortfalls, and continue to respond to the aspirations of our customers.

We are fully committed to a just transition to a net zero carbon economy, working in partnership with others, as we believe we can play a leadership role in these efforts, and in doing so help re-shape the South of Scotland economy and support genuinely inclusive growth for our region,





